

THE
NIAGARA REGION
IN
HISTORY

By PETER A. PORTER

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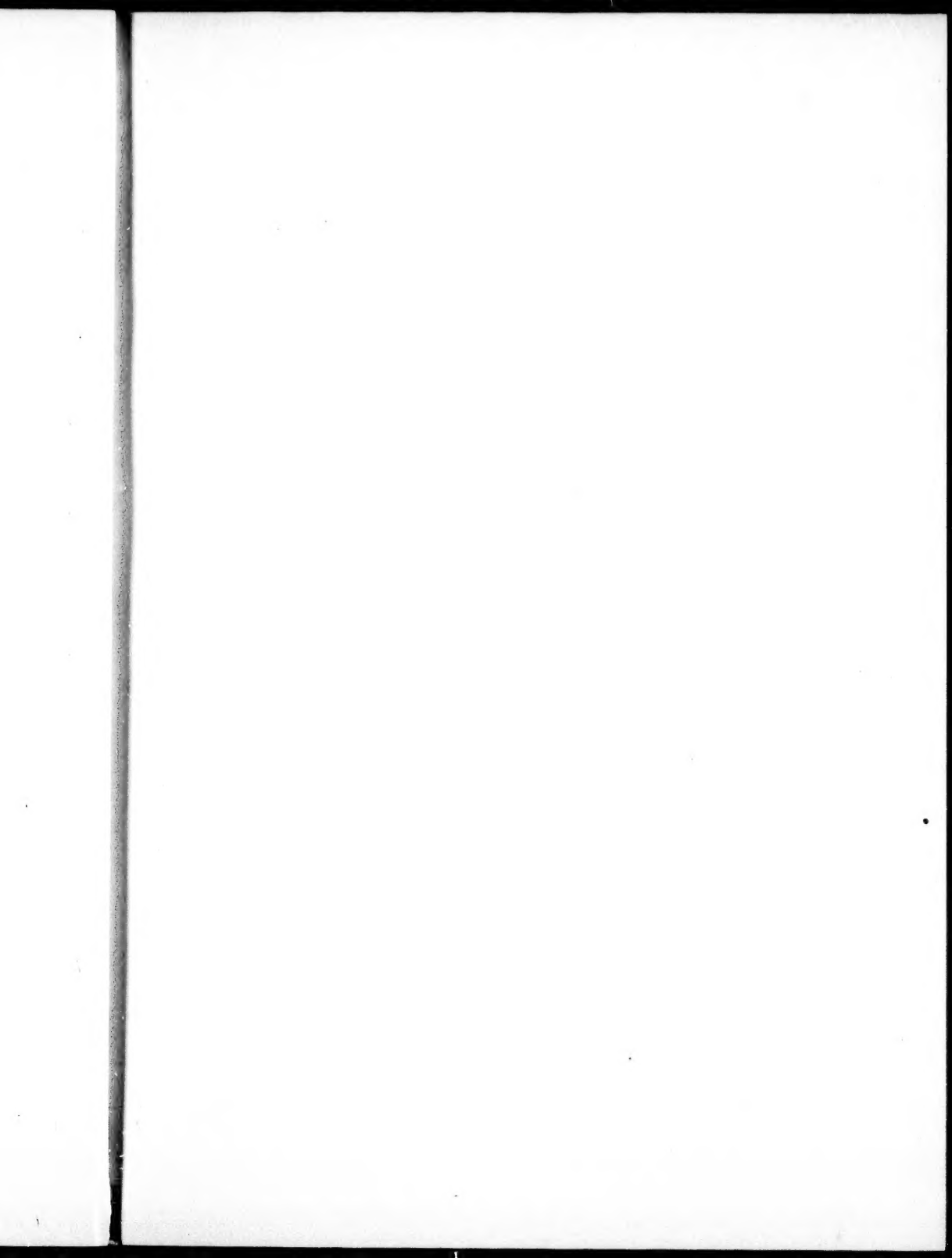
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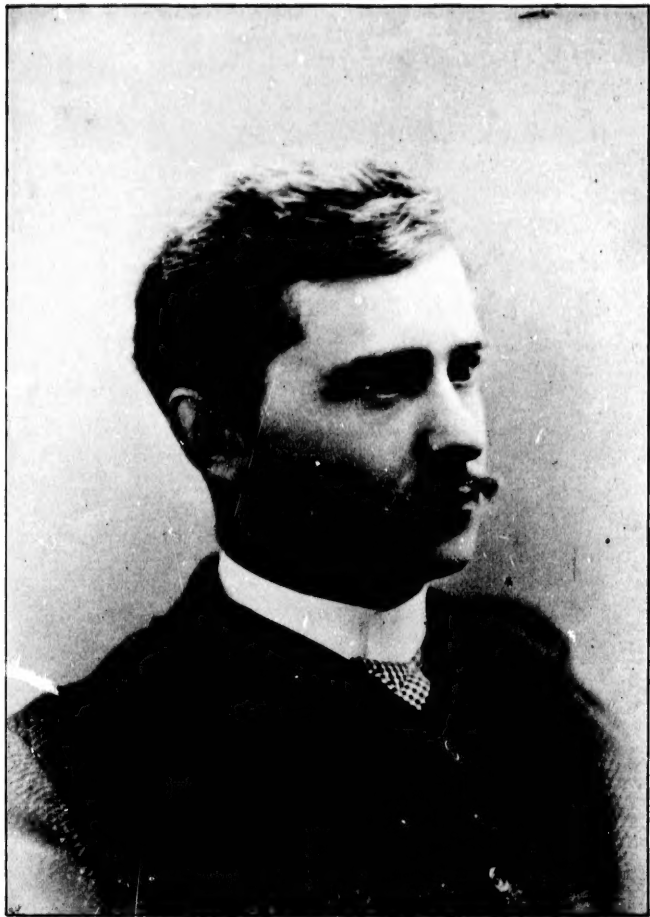
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Peter A. Porter

PETER A. PORTER is prominently identified with the interests of the city of Niagara Falls. As a member of the New York State Legislature in 1886, he introduced the Niagara Tunnel Bill, under which the Niagara power is now being developed.

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THE NIAGARA REGION IN HISTORY.

By Peter A. Porter.



THE OLD STONE CHIMNEY AT
NIAGARA, BUILT IN 1750.

IN 1764 Sir William Johnson, commander of the English forces in the Niagara region, supplementing the treaty of the preceding year between England and France, assembled all the Indian warriors of that region, some 2000 in number, comprising chiefly the hostile Senecas, at Fort Niagara, and acquired from them, for the English Crown, together with other territory, a strip of land, four miles

wide, on each bank of the Niagara river (the islands being excepted) from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. The Senecas also ceded to him, personally, at this time, "as proof of their regard and of their knowledge of the trouble which he had had with them from time to time," all the islands in the Niagara river, and he, in turn, as compelled by the military law of that period, ceded them to his Sovereign.

It is of the territory included in the above two grants, a region now popularly known as "the Niagara frontier," that the writer proposes to treat. And a famed and famous territory it is, for it would be difficult to find anywhere else an equal area of country (36 miles long and 8 miles broad, besides the islands) around which cluster so many, so important and such varied associations as one finds there.

Through its centre flows the grand Niagara river, between whose banks the waters of four great lakes,—the watershed of almost half a continent,—find their way to the ocean; and through the centre of the deepest channel of this river runs the boundary line between

the two great nations of North America. In it are located the Falls of Niagara, the ideal waterfall of the universe; in it are found the two government parks or reservations, established, respectively, by the State of New York and the province of Ontario, in order that the immediate surroundings of Niagara might be preserved, as nearly as possible, in their natural state and be forever free to all mankind. In it one meets with many and wondrous aspects of natural scenery; in it one finds geologic records, laid bare along the river's chasm by the force of the water thousands of years ago, and which hold so high a place in that science, that among its classifications the name Niagara is applied to one of the groups. In it are found botanic specimens of beauty and rarity, and it is stated that on Goat Island, embracing 80 acres, are to be found a greater number of species and flora than can be found in an equal area anywhere else. In it are to be found, also, the development of hydraulic enterprises which are regarded as stupendous even in this age of marvels; while as to places noted for historic interest, one may truly say that it is all historic ground.

Within sight of the spray of the Falls the red men, in ages long gone by, lived, held their councils, waged their inhuman warfares and offered up their human sacrifices. To this Niagara region long ago came the adventurous French traders, the forerunners of the "coureurs de bois," believed to have been the first white men who ever gazed upon the Falls, though the name of the man to whom that honour belongs, and the exact date at which he saw them will probably forever remain unknown.

Across Niagara's rapid stream went several of the early missionaries of the



THE FIRST KNOWN PICTURE OF NIAGARA FALLS.

(From Father Hennepin's "Nouvelle Decouverte," 1697.)

Catholic church as they carried the gospel to the various Indian tribes in the unknown wilderness. To this region came the French, first officially in the person of La Salle; afterwards, by their armies, seeking conquest and the control of the fur trade. At the mouth of the Niagara river the French established one of their most important posts. There they traded with, conferred with and intrigued with the Indians, making firm friends of some of the tribes and bitter enemies of others; and during the fourscore years that France held sway on the American continent, this region was a famous part of her domain in the new world.

Later on, steadily but surely driving the French before them, and finally totally depriving them of their possessions, came the English. Shortly after England became the undisputed owner of the region, the American Revolution began, and within twenty years after England had dispossessed France of this famous territory, she herself was compelled to recognize a new nation,

formed by her own descendants, and to cede to it one-half, or, counting the islands, more than one-half of the lands bordering on the Niagara river. From that time on, the United States and Great Britain have held undisputed possession of all this wondrous section.

Looking back in history for the first references to the Niagara region, we find them derived from Indian tradition or hearsay, and that, almost entirely by reason of the Falls and Rapids. However, it was not their grandeur, but the fact that the Indians were compelled to carry their canoes so many miles around them that impressed them. Thus, the existence of a great fall at this point was known to the Indians all over the North American continent, we know not how far back; certainly as early as the arrival of Columbus at San Salvador.

In 1535 Jacques Cartier made his second voyage to the St. Lawrence, and the Indians living along that river narrated to him what they had heard of the upper part of that stream, and of

the lakes beyond, mentioning, in connection therewith, a cataract and a portage. Lescarbot, in his "History of New France," published in 1609, tells of this in his story of Cartier's voyage. This is the earliest reference (1535) to the Great Lake region and Niagara's cataract.

Champlain, in his "Des Sauvages," published in 1603, speaks of a "fall," which, clearly, is Niagara, and on the map, in his "Voyages," published in 1613, he locates a river with such approximate exactness as to be the Niagara beyond doubt, and in that river he indicates a "sault d'eau," or water-fall.

In 1615 Etienne Brul , who was Champlain's interpreter, was in that vicinity, in the territory of the Neuter nation, and may have been the first pale-face to have seen the Falls. In 1626 the Franciscan priest Joseph de la Roche Dallion was on the Niagara river in the course of his missionary labors among the Neutrals. It is more than probable that at this date the Niagara route westward, as distinguished from the Ottawa route, was known and had been traversed by white men—the French traders or "coureurs de bois" previously mentioned. In the 1632 edition of his "Voyages," Champlain again, though inaccurately, locates on his map a river which cannot be any other than the Niagara, and quite accurately locates also a "waterfall, very high, at the end of Lake St. Louis (Ontario), where many kinds of fish are stunned in the descent."

In 1640 the Jesuit fathers Brebeuf and Chaumonot undertook their mission to the Neuter nation, the existence of the famous river of this nation having been familiar to the Jesuits before this

date. They crossed from the westerly to the easterly shore of the Niagara river, recrossing again, near where the village of Lewiston now stands, when their mission proved unsuccessful. In the Jesuit Relations we find references to this region. In that of 1641, published in 1642, Father L'Allement speaks of "the Neuter nation, Onguiaahra, having the same name as the river," and



FATHER HENNEPIN.
(From an Edition of 1702.)

in that of 1648, published in 1649, Father Ragueneau speaks of "Lake Erie which is formed by the waters from the Mer Douce (Lake Huron), and which discharges itself into a third lake, called Ontario, over a cataract of fearful height."

Sanson in his map of Canada, 1657, correctly locates the lakes and this region, and calls the Falls "Ongiara

Sault." In Davity, 1660, Le Sieur Gendron refers to the Falls in the exact words of Father Ragueneau above. In his "*Historie Canadensis*," De Creuxius very nearly correctly locates this region and the Niagara river, and calls the Falls "*Ongiara Cataractes*." In 1669 La Salle made a visit to the Senecas who dwelt in what is now known as Western New

from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. The outlet is 40 leagues long and has, from 10 to 12 leagues above its embouchure into Lake Ontario, one of the finest falls of water in the world, for all the Indians of whom I have inquired about it say that the river falls at that place from a rock higher than the tallest pines,—that is, about 300 feet. In fact, we heard it from the place where we were,

although from 10 to 12 leagues distant; but the fall gives such a momentum to the water that its velocity prevented our ascending the current by rowing, except with great difficulty. At a quarter of a league from the outlet where we were it grows narrower and its channel is confined between two very high, steep, rocky banks, inducing the belief that the navigation would be very difficult quite up to the cataract.

"As to the river above the falls, the current very often sucks into this gulf, from a great distance, deer and stags, elk and roebucks, that suffer themselves to be drawn from such a point in crossing the river that they are compelled to descend the falls and are overwhelmed in the frightful abyss. I will leave you to judge if that is not a fine cataract in which all the water of that large river falls from a height of 200 feet with a noise that is heard not only at the place where we were, 10 or

12 leagues distant, but also from the other side of Lake Ontario."

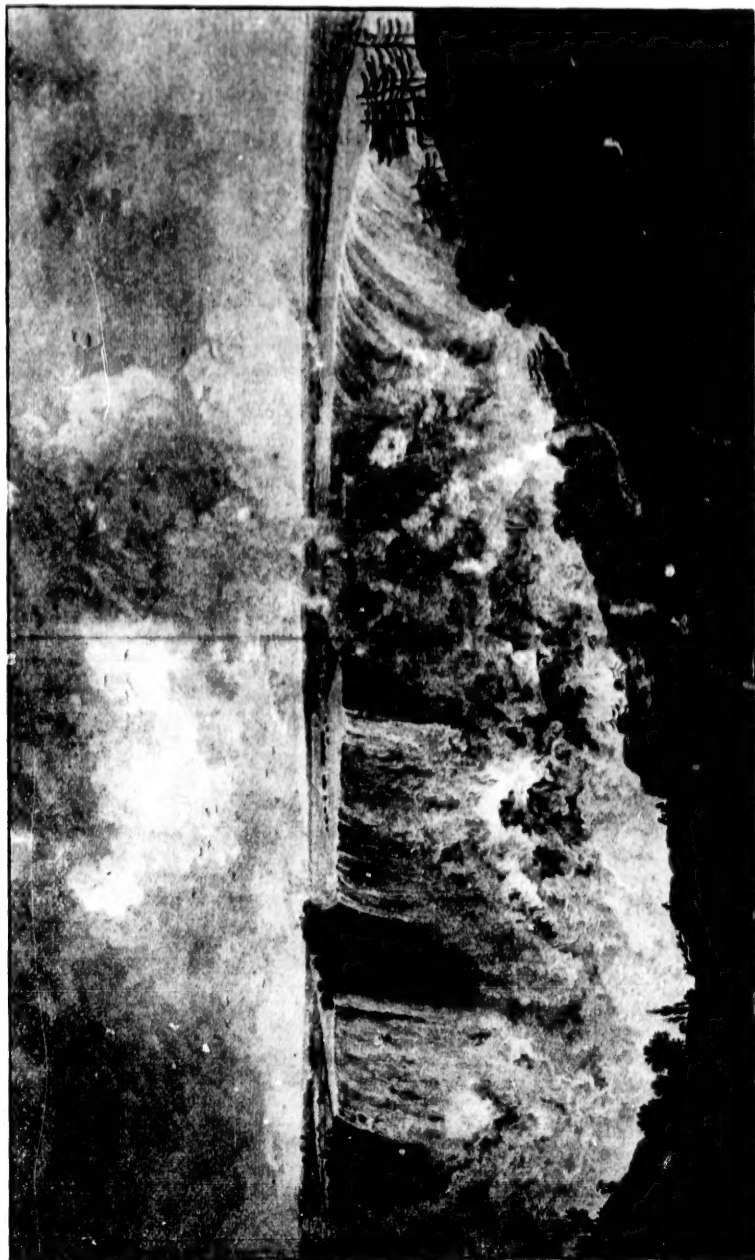
Neither Gallinée, Champlain, nor any of the other writers quoted heretofore, ever saw the Falls. In 1678 Father Hennepin visited the Falls and in 1683 published his first work, "*Louisiana*," in which he tells of the Niagara river and of the Falls themselves, calling them 500 feet high. On Coronelli's map of 1688 the word Niagara first appears in



RENÉ ROBERT CAVELIER, SIEUR DE LA SALLE.
(From an Edition of 1688)

York. With him went Fathers Dollier de Casson and René Gallinée, traveling as far as the western end of Lake Ontario, whence La Salle returned eastward. Gallinée's journal of that journey includes the earliest known description of Niagara Falls, which is as follows:

"We found a river, one-eighth of a league broad, and extremely rapid, forming the outlet or communication



THE CATARACT OF NIAGARA, WITH THE COUNTRY ADJACENT.
(From a Drawing taken on the spot by Lieut. Wm. Picrie, of the British Royal Artillery, 1796.)

cartography. In 1691 Father Le Clercq, in his "Establishment of the Faith in New France," uses the words "Niagara Falls." In 1697 Father Hennepin published his "New Discovery," in which he gives the well known description of Niagara Falls, commencing "betwixt the lakes Ontario and Erie there is a vast and prodigious cadence of water which falls down after a surprising and astonishing manner insomuch that the universe does not afford its parallel." Later on, in the same work, he describes them again, giving their height as 600 feet. He also gives in that work the first known picture of Niagara Falls, reproduced on page 6. Hennepin's two works as above, and a third, entitled "Nouveau Voyage," were translated into almost all the languages of Europe and by means of this, as well as by the work of Campanius Holm, published in 1702, who reproduces Hennepin's sketch of Niagara, and by the works of La Hontan, published in 1703, and of others later on, this region and Niagara Falls became familiar to all Europeans. It was reserved for Charlevoix and Borassow, each independently of the other, in 1721, to accurately measure the height of the Falls.

Hennepin was the first to use the modern spelling "Niagara," and he was followed by De Nonville, Cornelli and by all French writers since that time. English writers, on the other hand, did not uniformly adopt this spelling until the middle of the 18th century. The Neuter nation of Indians occupied all the territory now called "the Niagara Peninsula," by far the larger number of their villages being on the western side of the river. It was the Indian custom to give their tribal name to, or to take it from, the chief natural feature of the country which they inhabited; hence, they were called "Onguiaahra, the same name as the river," as noted by Father Ragueneau. The Neuter nation were so called, because, living between the Hurons on the west and the Iroquois on the east,—two tribes which were sworn enemies,—they were at peace with both, and in

their cabins the warriors of these two nations met without strife and in safety. The Neuters, however, were frequently at war with other tribes, and eventually even their neutrality towards the Hurons and the Iroquois disappeared and about 1643 the Senecas, the most westerly and also the most savage tribe of the Iroquois confederacy, attacked and annihilated the Neuters, their remnant being merged into the Iroquois.

There are numerous ways of spelling the Indian name of this Neuter nation, thirty-nine of them being given in the index volume of the Colonial History of the State of New York. The forms most commonly met with in early days were Jagara, Oneagerah, Onygarah, Iagara, Onigara, Ochniagara, Ognio-gorah, and those previously noted in this article. The word Niagara, according to Marshall, was derived by the French from Ongiara. The Senecas, when they conquered the Neuters, adopted that name as applied to the river and region, as near as the idiom of their language would allow; hence, their spelling, Nyah-ga-ah. The word, thus derived through the Iroquois and from the Neuter language, is said to mean the "thunder of the waters," though this poetic significance has been questioned by some who claim that it signifies "neck," alluding to the river being the connecting link between the two lakes. The Iroquois language had no labial sound and all their words were spoken without closing the lips. They seem to have pronounced it "Nyáh-ga-rah," and later on "Nee-áh-ga-rah," while in more modern Indian dialect, all vowels being still sounded, "Ni-ah-gáh-rah" was the ordinary pronunciation. Our modern word "Niagara" should really be pronounced Ni-a-gá-ra.

Many were the superstitions and legends which the Indians, living along the Niagara river and in the whole region, held as sacred. To the Neuter nation, naturally, the Falls of Niagara appeared in the nature of a divinity. From them they had taken their tribal name, and considered them the embodiment of religion and power. To them they offered sacrifices of many

kinds, often journeying long distances for the purpose. In the thunder of the Falls they believed they heard the voice of the Great Spirit. In the spray they believed they saw his habitation. To him they regularly and religiously contributed a portion of their crops and of the results of the chase, and exultingly offered human sacrifices and trophies on returning from such warlike expeditions as they were compelled to undertake. To him each warrior frequently made offerings of his personal adornments and weapons, and as an annual offering of good will from the tribe and a propitiation for continued neutrality, and therefore existence, they sacrificed each spring the fairest maiden of their tribe, sending her over the Falls in a white canoe, which was filled with fruits and flowers and guided solely by her own hand. The honour of being selected for this awful death was earnestly coveted by the maidens of that stoical race, and the clan to which the one selected belonged, held such choice to be a special honour to itself.

Tradition says that this annual sacrifice was abandoned, because, one year, the daughter of the great chief of the tribe was selected. Her father betrayed no emotion, but on the fateful day, as the white canoe, guided by his daughter's hand, entered the rapids, another canoe, propelled by a paddle in her father's hand, shot swiftly from the bank, followed the same channel and reached the brink and disappeared into the abyss but a moment after the one which bore his daughter. The tribe thought the loss of such a chief in such a way to be so serious a blow that the sacrifice was abandoned in order to prevent the possibility of a repetition. A more likely, but less poetic, reason for its abandonment lies in the belief that on the extermination of the Neuters, their conquerors, having no such inherent adoration for the Great Spirit of Niagara, and for many years not even occupying the lands of their victims, failed to continue the custom. The Neuter warriors also wanted to be buried beside their river, as many exhumed skeletons at various points along its

banks prove; and the nearer to the Falls, the greater the honour. Goat Island is said to have been the burying ground reserved for great chiefs and brave warriors, and the body of many an Indian brave lies in the soil of that beautiful spot.

Prior to 1678 France laid claim to a vast area, now embraced by Canada and the northern portion of the United States, east of the Mississippi, including the Niagara region, by reason of early explorations and discoveries by her seamen, traders and missionaries. From that date, when La Salle began his westward journeys of exploration, for eighty years, she was a paramount force in that region, though during the last few years of that period her prowess and supremacy were waning and were swept away in 1759 by the capture of Quebec and Fort Niagara, the latter being the last of the important posts that she held in the long line of fortifications which connected the great tract, known as Louisiana, with her eastern Canadian possessions. From 1759, by occupation, and from 1763, by treaty, England owned all this territory until 1776, when the Colonists demanded recognition as a separate nation. This England conceded in 1783, and thus relinquished all ownership of that portion of the Niagara region that lies east of the river, although it was not until after the ratification of Jay's treaty, in 1796, that England relinquished Fort Niagara; nor until the treaty of Ghent, in 1816, was it absolutely conceded that most of the islands in the Niagara river belonged to the United States.

On December 6, 1678, La Salle anchored his brigantine of ten tons in the Niagara river, just above its mouth. He saw the value, from a military standpoint, of the point of land at the mouth of the river and straightway built there a trading post. Proceeding up the river to where Lewiston now stands, he built there a fort of palisades, and carrying the anchors, cordage, etc., which he had brought with him for that purpose, up the mountain side and through the forest to the mouth of Cayuga creek, five miles above the Falls on



THE WHITE MAN'S FANCY.



THE RED MAN'S FACT.



THE BUILDING OF THE GRIFFON, 1679.
(Fac-simile reproduction of the original copper-plate engraving, first published in
Father Hennepin's "Nouvelle Decouverte," Amsterdam, 1704.)

the American side, where to-day is a hamlet bearing his name, he there built and launched the Griffon, the first vessel, other than Indian canoes, that ever sailed the upper lakes, and the pioneer of an inland commerce of untold value.

In 1687, the Marquis de Nonville, returning from his expedition against the Senecas, fortified La Salle's trading post at the mouth of the river, but it was abandoned during the following year. It was, however, rebuilt in stone in 1725 by consent of the Iroquois, and thereafter maintained. The site of the present village of Lewiston, named in honour of Governor Lewis of New York,—the head of navigation on the lower Niagara,—was the commencement of a portage of which the upper terminus was about a mile and a half above the Falls, the road traversed being, even now, called the "portage road." The upper end of this portage, at first merely an open landing place for boats, necessarily grew into a fortification, which was completed in 1750 and was called Fort de Portage, or, by some, Fort Little Niagara. A short distance below the site of this fort the French built their barracks. These and

the fort itself were burnt in 1759 by Joncaire, who was in command, to prevent their falling into the hands of the victorious English, and he and his men retreated to a station on Chippewa creek, across the river. An old stone chimney, believed to be the first stone structure built in that part of the country, and around which were built the French barracks, stands to day solitary and alone, the only reminder of the early commercial and military activities at this point.

It was in 1759 that the English commenced that short, memorable and decisive campaign which was forever to crush out French rule in North America. General Prideaux was in charge of the English forces thereabouts, and, carrying out that part of the plan assigned to him, collected his forces east of Fort Niagara on the shore of Lake Ontario. That fort had been strongly fortified, and this fact, coupled with its location, made its capture necessary for English success. Prideaux's demand for its surrender having been refused, he laid siege to it. He was killed during the continuance of the siege, and the command devolved on Sir William Johnson, who pushed operations vigorously

and captured the fort before French reinforcements could arrive.

These reinforcements had been sent from Venango, on Lake Erie, and, coming down the Niagara river, had reached Navy Island (Isle de Marine), then held by the French, when they heard of the fall of Fort Niagara. The certainty that the two vessels which had brought the troops and ammunition from Venango would be captured by the English, induced the French to take them, together with some small vessels

connected with the great French and English struggle. Champlain's early hostility to the Iroquois, when he sided with the Senecas against them, had made the Iroquois the firm friends of the English during all the subsequent years, and it had also endeared the French to the Senecas, even though the latter had subsequently joined the Iroquois confederacy.

After the total defeat of the French and their practical surrender of all their territory in 1759, the old hatred of the



THE CAPTURE OF FORT GEORGE, 1813.
(From an Old Engraving.)

which had recently been built on Navy Island, over to the northern shore of Grand Island, lying close by, into a quiet bay, where they set them on fire and totally destroyed them. As late as the middle of the present century, portions of these vessels were clearly visible under water in the arm of the river, which, from this incident, has become known as "Burnt Ship Bay."

One more historical point, the scene of the Devil's Hole massacre, is con-

English on the part of the Senecas, abetted, no doubt, by French influences, led them to commence a bloody campaign against the English in 1763. They knew the English were, on a certain day, to send a long train of wagons, filled with supplies and ammunition, from Fort Niagara to Fort Schlosser, a station, built in 1761 by Capt. Joseph Schlosser of the English army, to replace Fort de Portage, which had been destroyed two years pre-

vously. They knew also that the military force accompanying the train was to be a small one. At a point, known as the Devil's Hole, about three miles below the Falls, and at the edge of the precipice, they ambushed this fated supply train and destroyed it, forcing both train and escort over the high bank, and killing all but three of the escort and drivers. They then cunningly ambushed the relief force, which at the sound of the firing had set out from Lewiston where the English maintained a slight encampment, and killed all but eight of these. It was a striking example of Indian warfare and of Indian shrewdness. Shortly after this, in 1763, the treaty between France and England was signed, whereby England became the absolute owner and master of the northeastern portion of the North American continent.

No serious conflict marked England's rule in her new territory, acquired by so long and fierce a struggle and at so great a cost of lives and money. But thirteen years after the above treaty was signed, the American Revolution commenced. Had Gen. Sullivan's expedition against the Senecas in 1779, been successful, as planned, he would have pursued the dusky warriors who fled to Fort Niagara, and would have attacked and probably captured that fort, then in possession of the English; but misfortune befel him on his westward march, and the Niagara region was never the scene of actual hostilities during that war. When it closed, England had lost and relinquished to the United States all that portion of this region that lies east of the Niagara river.

The Niagara region, especially that part lying along the banks of the river, felt the full burden of the three years of border warfare between American and English forces, each with their Indian allies, known in history as the war of 1812. In the fall of 1812, about four months after the declaration of war, Gen. Van Rensselaer established his camp just east of the village of Lewiston, and collected an army for the invasion of Canada. After some delay and one unsuccessful attempt to cross the river,

many of his men reached the Canadian shore and promptly and easily occupied an advantageous position on Queenston Heights. Gen. Brock hastened from Fort George, at the mouth of the river, with English reinforcements, and, in endeavoring to recapture this point of vantage, was killed at the head of his troops. Other English reinforcements having arrived, the Americans were defeated and dislodged from their position, many being forced over the edge of the bluff. Most of these and many on the brow of the mountain were taken prisoners. Meanwhile, directly across the river, on the American side, in full view of the battle, were several hundred American volunteers who basely refused to go to the aid of their companions.

The results of this first battle were most depressing to the American cause. At the foot of Queenston Heights an inscribed stone, set in place in 1860 by the Prince of Wales with appropriate ceremonies, marks the spot where Gen. Brock fell, and on the heights above a lofty column was erected to his memory in 1826, as a monument of his country's gratitude. This was blown up by a miscreant in 1840, but was replaced in 1853 by the present more beautiful shaft, within whose foundations Gen. Brock's remains lie buried.

It was in November, 1812, that Gen. Alexander Smythe, of Virginia, commanding the American army on this frontier, issued his famous bombastic circular, inviting everybody to assemble at Black Rock, near the source of the Niagara river and to invade Canada. "Come in companies, half companies, pairs or singly; come anyhow, but come," was its substance, and about 4000 men responded. But Smythe proved incapable, and having made himself a laughing-stock in many ways, among others in challenging Gen. Porter, who had questioned his courage, to a duel (which challenge was accepted and shots were exchanged on Grand Island), the contemplated invasion was abandoned.

In May, 1813, the Americans captured Fort George and the village of Newark, both on the Canadian shore

near the mouth of the river, and held them until December of that year. So effectual was American supremacy at this time, that the English Fort Erie, at the source of the river, and Chippawa, just above the Falls, together with all barracks and store houses along the river, were abandoned, and the English evacuated the entire frontier. Fort Erie was promptly occupied by the Americans. Several minor attacks were made by small parties of English at points on the American side during 1813, one at Black Rock, where the English were badly repulsed, being the most important.

In December, 1813, the British assumed the offensive on their side of the river and soon Gen. McClure, who was in command of the American forces holding Fort George, determined to abandon it and cross to Fort Niagara. He blew up Fort George and applied the torch to the beautiful adjoining village of Newark. This was the oldest settlement in that part of Canada, was at one time the residence of her lieutenant-governor, and was further noted as the place where the first Parliament of Upper Canada was held in 1792. Its destruction was in the line of military tactics which leaves nothing to shelter an enemy when they occupy evacuated ground; but it was a severe winter, the snow was deep, and the sufferings of those whose homes were thus burnt, were excessive.

The burning of Newark raised a storm of wrath throughout Canada and England which stimulated the English forces to make great efforts for victory and retaliation. In these they were decidedly successful, for ten days later, at three o'clock in the morning, Col. Murray, of the British Army, surprised and captured Fort Niagara. Had Capt. Leonard, who was in charge of the Fort while Gen. McClure was at his headquarters in Buffalo, been vigilant, the Fort would have, probably, been successfully defended. As it was, it fell an easy prey. Lossing says: "It might have been an almost bloodless victory had not the unhallowed spirit of revenge demanded victims." As it was,

many of the garrison, including invalids, were bayoneted after all resistance had ceased. The British General Riall, with a force of regulars and Indians was waiting at Queenston for the agreed signal of success, and when the cannon's roar announced the victory, he hurried them across the river to the village of Lewiston, which was sacked and destroyed in spite of such opposition as the few Americans in Fort Gray on Lewiston Heights could make.

After a temporary check on Lewiston Heights the British pushed on to Manchester (that name having been given to it in anticipation of its ultimately becoming the great manufacturing village of America) as the settlement at the Falls was then called. That place, the settlement at Schlosser, two miles above, and the country for some miles back shared the fate of Lewiston; the same was meted out to Youngstown, near Fort Niagara. The destruction of the bridge across the creek at Tonawanda saved Buffalo from the same fate, but only for a few days. Gen. Riall crossed the river at Queenston, and a few days later appeared opposite Black Rock which adjoined Buffalo. This he promptly attacked and captured. The hastily gathered and unorganized American forces not only offered little resistance, but hundreds deserted. Buffalo was burnt, only four houses being left standing, and many persons were killed.

The opening of the campaign of 1814 found an American army at Buffalo, and on July 3, Fort Erie surrendered to the Americans. On July 5, the Americans met and, after a fierce fight, defeated the British in the memorable battle of Chippawa, on the Canadian side, two miles above the Falls. Soon afterwards, the British retreated to Queenston, followed by the Americans under Gen. Brown, who then determined to recapture Fort George; but learning that the expected fleet could not co-operate with him, he changed his plans and returned to Chippawa. Gen. Scott, reconnoitering from this place in the late afternoon of July 25, found Gen. Riall with his re-

inforced army drawn up in line of battle at Lundy's Lane. Gen. Scott, with a nominal force, but with the hope of gaining time for the advent of Gen. Brown's army, immediately gave battle. Of the details of that battle, fought mainly by the glorious light of a summer moon, and continued until after midnight, with the spray of Niagara drifting over the heads of the opposing armies and the thunder of the Falls mingling with the roar of the cannon, it is not possible to recount much. The central point on the hill was held by a British battery, and it was in response to an order to capture it that Col. Miller made his famous reply, "I'll try, Sir." He did try, and successfully, and the battery, once captured, was held by the Americans against oft-repeated and brave attacks by the British.

When at last the British army retreated, the Americans fell back to their camp at Chippawa, and before they returned the next morning, the British had once more, owing to the American General Ripley's negligence, occupied the field and dragged away the cannon which had been captured from them. The battle of Niagara Falls, Lundy's Lane, or Bridgewater as it is variously called was claimed as a victory by the British, and is still annually celebrated, on the battlefield, as such. The Americans, too, regarded it as a substantial victory, and the United States Congress voted to Generals Scott, Brown, Porter, Gaines and Ripley gold medals for their services in this and other battles of the war.

The American army now returned to Fort Erie which they strongly fortified, and where they were besieged on August 3, by the British. For ten days both armies were busy preparing for the inevitable and decisive contest. Just after midnight on August 14, the British attacked the fort, but were finally repulsed. From this time to September 17, there was frequent cannonading, but on that date a sortie from the fort was made by the Americans, and was so boldly planned and so faithfully executed, that the British were completely

routed, and Buffalo and Western New York saved from invasion. Lord Napier refers to this sortie as the only instance in modern warfare, where a besieging army was totally routed by such a movement. A few more desultory engagements occurred along the Canadian bank of the river, Gen. Izard having assumed command of the American army; but the season was too far advanced for any further offensive operations on this peninsula, and Canada was abandoned. Fort Erie was mined, and on November 5, 1814, was laid in ruins. It still remains so,—a picturesque spot. Some space has been devoted to this war, although not a fraction of what its importance demands. During its continuance almost every foot of land along both banks of the Niagara river was the scene of strife, of victory and defeat, of triumphs of armies and of bravery and heroism of individuals.

The treaty of Ghent restored peace to both countries, to the delight of all, especially of the inhabitants along the frontier. The commissioners appointed under that treaty to settle the question of the boundary between the United States and Canada agreed subsequently that that line, "between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario should run through the centre of the deepest channel of the Niagara river, and through the point of the Horse Shoe Fall." Later years proved this to be a variable line as far as the point of the Fall is concerned, though this fact will never impair the validity of the boundary line. By the above decision Grand Island and Goat Island became American soil, and Navy Island fell under British rule. The frontier, especially on the American side, recovered rapidly from the effects of the war, for it was a section sought by settlers, and many who reached the Niagara river on a projected journey to lands farther west, became residents of the locality.

Prior to 1825, all heavy goods were sent westwards by Lake Ontario vessels to Lewiston; thence, were carted over the well-known "Portage road" to Schlosser, and there again reloaded into vessels which went up the Niagara

river, past Black Rock and Buffalo at the source of the river, and then out into Lake Erie. Freights from the west followed the opposite course, over the same route; and this carrying trade along the frontier, controlled almost entirely by one firm, was a source of personal wealth to its members, a means of livelihood to many a family, and a prominent factor in the speedy development of the region. On October 26, 1825, a cannon in the village of Buffalo, at the source of the Niagara river boomed forth its greeting, followed, a few seconds later, by another cannon, near Black Rock; and thus thundered cannon after cannon, down the Niagara river, to Tonawanda; thence, easterly to Albany, and south, along the Hudson river, to New York city, announcing the glad message that, at the source of the Niagara river, the waters of Lake Erie had just been let into that barely completed water-way, the Erie Canal. The completion of the canal built up Buffalo, but at the same time, checked the rapid growth of the northern portion of the region, by causing a total suspension of traffic over the old portage.

Two events, entirely dissimilar and in no way connected with warlike operations, occurred in this region in the year 1826, and each attracted the attention of the whole world. The first was the proposal of Major Mordecai M. Noah to create a second City of Jerusalem within clear view of the Falls of Niagara, by buying Grand Island, comprising some 18,000 acres, and there building up for the Hebrew race an ideal community of wealth and industry. He even went so far, in his assumed capacity of the Great High Priest of the project, as to lay the corner stone of the future city of Ararat. This he did, not even within the boundaries of his proposed city, but some miles away, on the altar of a Christian church in Buffalo, to which church, clad in sacerdotal robes, attended in procession by military and civic authorities, local societies, and a great concourse of people he was impressively escorted. The Patriarch of Jerusalem, however, refused his sanction to the project, money did not

pour in to its support, and it was ultimately abandoned. The corner stone was, however, built into a small brick monument at White Haven, a point on Grand Island opposite Tonawanda, and is now in the rooms of the Buffalo Historical Society.

The other event was the reputed murder of William Morgan, of Batavia, who had threatened to disclose the secrets of the masonic fraternity in print. He was quietly seized and taken away from his home, and was traced, in the hands of his abductors, through Lewiston, to Fort Niagara. There he was confined in what is still called "Morgan's Dungeon," a windowless cell that was probably used as a powder magazine. All trace of him was lost after he entered the fort, and tradition says he was taken from his dungeon by night, placed in a boat, to be sent, as he was told, to Canada, rowed out on Lake Ontario, and forced into a watery grave. Several persons were arrested and tried for his murder, but no proof of their being directly concerned in the matter, nor, in fact, any direct proof of Morgan's death being introduced, they were discharged. Some persons, however, were sentenced to imprisonment for conspiracy in connection with the matter. Thus the episode upon which the famous, powerful and widespread anti-masonic agitation was based, occurred in, and became an integral part of Niagara's history.

In the same year, the first survey and report were made at Lewiston on a project, which, so far as any commencement of it is concerned, is now as remote as it was then. Yet, it is a project which has a national importance, on which, in at least four surveys, the United States Government has employed some of its greatest engineers, and one which has, on numerous occasions, been discussed and advocated by commercial bodies, and in the halls of the United States Congress; namely, a ship canal, of a capacity large enough to float the largest war vessels around the Falls of Niagara. From a point from two to four miles above the Falls, to the deep and quiet waters near

Lewiston, has been the route most generally approved for such a canal, of which the cost would be enormous. The resulting benefits, however, especially as the population and wealth of the United States increase, might be inestimable, especially in the event of a war with England and Canada.

The Niagara region again became the theatre of war in 1837, when the Patriots undertook to upset the Government of Canada. While the first revolt occurred at York, now Toronto, the entire Canadian bank of the Niagara river was kept in a ferment for several months. Navy Island was at one time the principal rendezvous of the Patriots, and from there, on December 17, 1837, William Lyon Mackenzie, the leader, signing himself "Chairman pro tem of the provincial (a printer's error, which should read provisional) government of the State of Upper Canada," issued his famous proclamation to the inhabitants of the Province.

Without reference to the various intrigues carried on all along the frontier by the Patriots with their American sympathizers, of whom there were, doubtless, a goodly number, the writer would mention only the crucial event of the war, the Caroline episode. It was openly charged by the Canadians that substantial aid was being rendered from the American side to the Patriots, both by private individuals in various ways, and especially by reason of the non-interference of the national and New York State authorities when informed, on credible testimony, that arms and ammunition were being shipped and other aid was being furnished from American soil to the Canadian rebels. This feeling was so bitter on the part of the English that it is not surprising that they seized the first opportunity for retaliation.

A small steamer, the *Caroline*, had been chartered by some people in Buffalo to run between that city, Navy Island where the insurgents were encamped, and Schlosser, on the American side, where there was a landing place for boats and a hotel. They maintained that it was a private money-

making venture, transporting the sight-seers to the Patriot's camp; but from the Canadian's view the real object was to convey provisions and arms to their enemies. On the night of December 29, 1837, the *Caroline* lay moored at Schlosser dock. The excitement of the rebellion had drawn many people to this locality, the little hotel was filled and some persons had sought a night's lodging on the boat.

At midnight, six boats, filled with British soldiers, sent from Chippawa by Sir Allan McNab, silently approached the *Caroline*. The soldiers promptly boarded her, drove off all on board, both crew and lodgers, cut her adrift, set her on fire, and again taking to their boats, towed her out to the middle of the river and cast her loose. And a glorious sight, viewed merely from a scenic standpoint, it was. The clear dark sky above and the cold dark body of water beneath. Ablaze all along her decks, her shape clearly outlined by the flames, she drifted grandly and swiftly towards the Falls. Reaching the rapids, the waves extinguished most of the flames; but, still on fire, racked and broken, she pitched and tossed forward to and over the Horse Shoe Fall, into the gulf below. The whole affair, the incentive therefor, the methods employed, and the manner of the attack caused intense excitement, and once again the Niagara frontier was threatened with war, and the militia along the border were actually called into the field.

Long diplomatic correspondence followed, the British Government assuming full responsibility for the claimed breaches of international law and the acts of her officers. During the *melée* at the dock, one man, Amos Durfee, was killed. A British subject, Alexander McLeod, claimed to have been one of the attacking force, was soon after arrested on American soil and was tried for the murder in New York State, but was finally acquitted. War was wisely averted, but another fateful chapter had been added to Niagara's history.

With the exception of the Fenian outbreak on the Canadian side of the

river in 1866, the region has been free from war's alarms since the days of the Patriots. The Fenian outbreak was one of the results of the plan of the revolutionary Irishmen to oppose the English Government, and to compel that government to restore Ireland's rights. The Fenian hostility to Canada was solely because of the fact that the latter was an English dependency. The special time was selected, because of the actual service that many loyal Irishmen

In 1885, the State of New York, after an agitation by prominent men for several years, purchased the land on the American side, including Goat Island and all the smaller islands adjacent to the Falls, and above and below them, for a State Reservation. In 1887, the Province of Ontario, Canada, took a similar action. The Canadian Government, many years ago, with rare foresight had reserved a strip of land, sixty-six feet wide, along the water's edge

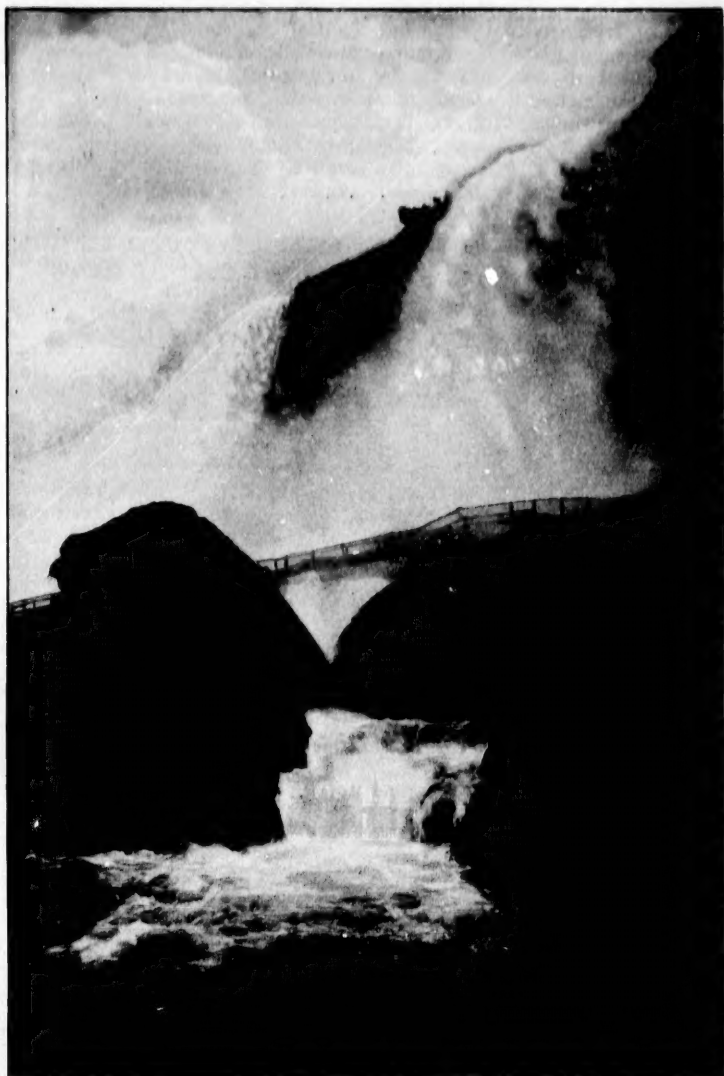


THE STEAMER CAROLINE BURNT AND FORCED OVER THE FALLS ON DECEMBER 29, 1837.
(From an Old Engraving.)

had just then seen in the United States army during the Rebellion. Of actual hostilities on this frontier there was but one occurrence during the brief agitation, fought on the Canadian side opposite Buffalo, from which city the Fenians invaded Canada. It was known as the battle of Ridgeway, the main contest having been at that point, with a subordinate engagement at a hamlet called Waterloo, close to the water's edge. The Fenians were temporarily successful, but were ultimately entirely defeated and their invading force quickly dispersed.

above the Falls, and along the edge of the high bank below them, from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, as a military reserve. This is now under the control of the Canadian Park Commissioners, and, together with the additional lands acquired near the Falls, and the land around Brock's Monument, forms an ideal government reservation.

The honour of first suggesting the preservation of the scenery about the Falls has been claimed for many persons. Others, later on, suggested it officially; others still, advocated it more publicly and more persistently,



A RECENT VIEW OF NIAGARA FALLS.

but the first real suggestion, though made without any reference to details, came from two Scotchmen, Andrew Reed and James Matheson, who, in 1835, in a work describing their visit as a deputation to the American churches, first broached the idea that "Niagara does not belong to Canada or America. Such spots should be deemed the property of civilized mankind, and nothing should be allowed to weaken their efficacy on the tastes, the morals, and the enjoyment of men."

Such, in the ordinary acceptance of the word and in the briefest form, is an outline of the history of the Niagara region. Many points and facts of interest have necessarily been left untouched, but brief reference should be made to the old tramway, built from the water's edge, at the very head of navigation on the lower river, up the almost perpendicular bank, 300 feet high, close to Hennepin's "three mountains." It was used in very early days, probably before the American Revolution, for raising and lowering heavy goods between the vessels and the portage wagons, and consisted of a flat car, on broad runners, moving on wooden rails. It was raised and lowered by a windlass, and this latter was operated by Indian labour then accessible only at the Indians' own price. Braves who ordinarily would scorn to work at any manual labour, gladly toiled all day for a plug of tobacco and a pint of whiskey. The tramway was notable as being the first known adaptation of the crude principle of a railroad in the United States.

It may not be amiss to mention also, the reservation of the Tuscarora Indians, east of Lewiston, where the half-breed remnants of the last-embraced tribe of the Six Nations now reside, cultivating their fields, and educating their children under the care of the State. A tribute also is due to Canadian foresight in the building of the Welland Canal which connects Canada's frontage on the Great Lakes with her system of St. Lawrence canals to the seaboard. Mention, finally, should be made of the modern suggestion of a ship railway

around the Falls, touching, at its terminals, about the same points on the upper and lower river as those held in view in the previously-suggested ship canal, and proposing, in the ascent and descent of the Lewiston mountain (which was the old shore of Lake Ontario before it receded to its present level), as remarkable a triumph of engineering skill as was shown in the enormous projected locks and one hundred-acre basin of the ship canal.

Next, glance back to the many Indian villages which, long years ago, dotted the region, the four or more of the Neuter nation, or Kahkwas, on the eastern side of the river, and a much larger number on the western side; later on, to the gradual occupation of these lands by the Senecas, almost three generations after their ancestors had annihilated the Neuters; then, to the Seneca village, built on the site of the present city of Buffalo, and then to the one built years ago on the site of the village still called Tonawanda, where, of late years, at the "long house," was annually held the council of the remnants of the Six Nations; and then at the docks in that village where once floated the Indian's canoe, and where now is seen the maze of vessels whose cargoes have, in the last two decades, built up the commercial trade of this, the second largest lumber market in America.

Turn, next, to the geological page and recall the ever fresh and still much-discussed question as to the ages that it has taken the Falls to cut their way back from Lewiston to their present location; consider, too, the question regarding the time when a great inland sea covered the whole region, of which proof is, even to-day, found in the shells which underlie the soil on Goat Island and the adjacent country. Consider, further, the query as to when and why the great flood of waters abandoned its old channel which ran westward from the whirlpool to the edge of the bluff at St. Davids, far to the west of the present outlet of the river into Lake Ontario, and how that old channel, still easily traceable, was

filled up to nearly the level of the surrounding country.

Look also at the view, given in very recent years by nature, of how her forces worked to excavate the Niagara gorge in the mass of old Table Rock, left hanging over the abyss for years and falling by its own weight in 1853. Remember the thrilling trip of the little steamer "Maid of the Mist," which, from the quiet waters of her usual, circumscribed limit below the Falls, was, in 1861, taken through the mad rapids safely into the whirlpool and, thence, through the lower rapids into Lake Ontario,—the only vessel that, during the 100 years of Queenston's existence as a port of entry, ever entered it from up-stream; and which vessel was compelled by the canny officer then in charge of the port, to take out entrance and clearance papers, although, according to these, she carried "no passengers and no freight." The trip of that little steamer proved, so far as the river below the Falls was concerned, what the courts have since decided, that the Niagara river throughout its entire length is a navigable stream.

Finally, think of Niagara as the Mecca of all travelers to the New World, think of

"What troops of tourists have encamped upon
the river's brink,
What poets have shed from countless quills,
Niagaras of ink."

Turn also to the long list of noted persons who have paid their devotions and tributes at Niagara's shrine. Potentates and princes have come, gazed on the Falls, and gone away, their visit to Niagara, perhaps like their lives, colorless and without a trace. Then, with greater satisfaction, turn to the large number of famous men and women, uncrowned, but still, by reason of their abilities, rulers of the people, who by their words, their pens, or their pencils, have given their impressions of the cataract to the world, and have, at least, earned for themselves thereby the right to be allowed a niche in Niagara's temple of fame. And numerous are the names of men and women who, in these and other ways, have connected their names with Niagara, embracing the

leaders in every branch of science, knowledge and art.

There is yet another set of men whose greatest notoriety has been acquired at Niagara. Among these are Francis Abbott, "the hermit of Niagara," whose solitary life, close to the Falls themselves, and his death by drowning, have stood as a perpetual proof of the influence of the great cataract on human nature; Sam Patch, whose daring led him to make two jumps from a scaffold, 100 feet high, into the deep waters at the base of the Goat Island cliff, safely in both cases, although, not long afterwards, a similar attempt at the Genesee Falls proved to be his last; Blondin, whose marvelous nerve led him repeatedly, and under various conditions, to cross the gorge on a tight-rope; Joel Robinson, whose life was often risked thereabouts to save that of others; and Matthew Webb, whose prowess as a swimmer led him to try, unaided by artificial appliances, to swim through the whirlpool rapids, in which attempt he lost his life.

Of early Indian names on the frontier, two are specially prominent,—Red Jacket, a Seneca, the greatest of all Indian orators, who spent most of his long life near Buffalo, and died there, and who fought, with the rest of his tribal warriors, in the American army in the war of 1812; and John Brant, son of the famous Joseph Brant, a Mohawk, educated mainly at Niagara at the mouth of the river in Canada, whose first leadership in war was as an ally of the British at the battle of Queenston.

Forever and inseparably connected with the Niagara region will be the names of all of the persons here referred to, some mentioned merely as members of a class, others individually. Among the first on this roll of honour, as they were among the first to view, depict, and describe the Falls, are the names of La Salle and Hennepin,—the intrepid explorer, and the noble, though much villified, priest, for since 1678 there has been no portion of the globe to which the attention of mankind has been more, and in more ways, attracted than to this Niagara region.

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